

Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization

Calhoun Gateway Small Area Plan

A CONSORTIUM PROJECT OF: Augsburg College; College of St. Catherine; Hamline University; Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs; Macalester College; Metropolitan State University; Minneapolis Community College; Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program; University of Minnesota (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs; Children, Youth and Family Consortium; Minnesota Extension Service); University of St. Thomas; and Minneapolis community and neighborhood representatives.

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**Center for Urban and Regional Affairs
University of Minnesota
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Calhoun Gateway Small Area Plan

Conducted on behalf of
West Calhoun Neighborhood Association, Cedar Isles Dean
Neighborhood Association

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Executive Summary

The Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA) and the West Calhoun Neighborhood Council (WCNC) are collaborating on a project that aims to improve beautification, recreation, traffic flow, and pedestrian access of the business district of Calhoun Commons and Calhoun Village, plus some of the surrounding residential/commercial areas. This area of the two neighborhoods is known as the Calhoun Gateway, and it has the boundaries of France Avenue South on the west, Midtown Greenway on the north, Thomas Avenue on the east, and West 32nd Street on the south.

A Small Area Plan is used mainly to guide future land use in a portion of a city. In the case of Minneapolis, it is an informal process that provides an opportunity for neighborhoods to have a hand in the physical design of their community as a long-term vision. The Calhoun Gateway Small Area Plan will be referred to when WCNC and CIDNA acquire funds to use for the betterment of their neighborhoods.

Contextual Information

The Calhoun Gateway falls primarily between two community corridors within the Calhoun-Isles community - West Lake Street and Excelsior Boulevard. These two streets have been named community corridors under Minneapolis' comprehensive plan, *The Minneapolis Plan*. A community corridor supports:

- ◆ Consolidating commercial uses
- ◆ Promoting viable street life during the day and evening by encouraging a mix of uses at appropriate locations
- ◆ Strengthening the residential character by developing a variety of housing types
- ◆ Enhancing the pedestrian environment

Within the area comprised of the West Calhoun and CIDNA neighborhoods, the total population from 2000 is 4,563 residents with 59 percent living in CIDNA. From 1990 to 2000, West Calhoun saw a decrease in its population by a mere 0.5 percent while CIDNA enjoyed an increase of over 20 percent in that ten-year period. The fastest-growing age group in both neighborhoods from 1990 to 2000 is for those people who fall within the age bracket of 45-54 years. Within the area comprising both neighborhoods, seven percent of the population in 2000 identified with being non-white. This compares

to the identification of almost 35 percent of the total Minneapolis population of 382,618 people as non-white. The total number of households within both neighborhoods is 2,756 with both CIDNA and West Calhoun sharing almost an equal percentage. The total number of housing units in the two neighborhoods is 2,888; 60 percent (1733 units) of those are renter-occupied. This is an increase of 13.3 percent from 1990 to 2000. In 2000, 62.9 percent of the renter-occupied housing units fell within the West Calhoun neighborhood boundaries.

Existing and Adjacent Land Use Plans

Many land use plans have been created within the study area as well as in adjacent neighborhoods. It is not only good to frame new and innovative ideas for the Calhoun Gateway Small Area Plan, but also to build a connection to these past land use plans. Additionally, the Small Area Plan should be compatible and enhance the plans created for adjoining neighborhoods.

Existing plans include:

- ◆ Cedar-Isles-Dean NRP Neighborhood Action Plan
- ◆ West Calhoun NRP Neighborhood Action Plan
- ◆ Excelsior Boulevard Corridor Study

Adjacent plans include:

- ◆ Lake Street Midtown Greenway Corridor Framework Plan
- ◆ Park Commons, St. Louis Park

All of the land use plans have common themes of forming community identities and creating a more livable, human-scale environment for people using all modes of transportation. The NRP plans helped the two neighborhoods to gain access to city funds in order to accomplish some of their neighborhood goals, while all the land use plans aim to create a unity between their study areas and the surrounding districts.

Community Input

The most important aspect of any planning process is public participation, particularly in the creation of a Small Area Plan where the neighborhoods decide their own future land uses. In the case of the Calhoun Gateway, many stakeholders were involved in the planning of ideas. They included:

- ◆ Residents – owners and renters
- ◆ Business owners
- ◆ Board members
- ◆ NRP staff

Neighborhood input was gathered through informal interviews, attendance at neighborhood meetings, and a survey of West Calhoun and CIDNA residents. All households within the two neighborhoods received the survey, and 235 residents sent back surveys for a return rate of nine percent. CIDNA residents comprised 57 percent of returned surveys, while West Calhoun residents were 43% percent.

Some survey highlights:

- ◆ 93 percent (215) of respondents use a car as their primary mode of transportation
- ◆ 36 percent (84) use the greenway paths to travel to destinations within the immediate area
- ◆ Proximity to Uptown and Downtown rated as the highest asset among respondents
- ◆ Most residents find traffic to be an overwhelming downfall in the area
- ◆ Calhoun Village is preferred to Calhoun Commons

The survey results indicate that residents have an overall feeling of satisfaction with the commercial and residential portions of their neighborhoods. Residents appreciate the beauty of their surroundings, including the lakes and open green spaces throughout the neighborhoods. Overall, West Calhoun and CIDNA stakeholders enjoy the amenities found within the neighborhoods.

Opportunity Sites

General and specific land use planning ideas became apparent through information received from neighborhood meetings, interviews, and surveys. The Calhoun Gateway and its surrounding area offer a number of amenities for residents, however some improvements can be made in the future. Ideas to improve the Calhoun Gateway are meant to perform two different tasks. They are:

- ◆ Creating a Sense of Place
- ◆ Improving Neighborhood Transportation

Creating a Sense of Place

The Calhoun Gateway within the West Calhoun and CIDNA neighborhoods needs to create identifiable features so visitors know they have entered a worthwhile part of the city, but residents also should feel a sense of attachment to their surroundings. This is especially important since the two neighborhoods are an entry point for many non-residents coming from western suburbs. One particular technique used to accomplish such a task is to create some common visual features found throughout the Calhoun Gateway with art as the dominant theme. Such features include:

- ◆ Banners
- ◆ Landscaping
- ◆ Pedestrian-Scale Lighting
- ◆ Transit Amenities

Improving Neighborhood Transportation

Many of the ideas and concerns for the improvement of neighborhood transportation emphasize creating an infrastructure that accommodates a variety of transportation modes. This means slowing traffic and dreaming up ways to make the Calhoun Gateway more human-scale rather than catered to automobiles in a suburban strip mall fashion.

Improvements pertain to:

- ◆ Lake Street Bridge
- ◆ Lake Street/Excelsior Boulevard
- ◆ Bus Shelters
- ◆ Signage for the Midtown Greenway

- ♦ Pedestrian Bridge
- ♦ Commercial Parking Lots
- ♦ West Calhoun Access Point

This Small Area Plan of the Calhoun Gateway is just the first step in the process of creating ideas for future land uses in the West Calhoun and Cedar-Isles-Dean neighborhoods. Based on the objectives of existing neighborhood plans and community input, this document will hopefully act as a guide in further decision-making.

Introduction

The Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA) and the West Calhoun Neighborhood Council (WCNC) are collaborating on a project that aims to improve beautification, recreation, traffic flow, and pedestrian access of the business district of Calhoun Commons and Calhoun Village, plus some of the surrounding residential/commercial areas. This area of the two neighborhoods is known as the Calhoun Gateway, and it has the boundaries of France Avenue South on the west, Midtown Greenway on the north, Thomas Avenue on the east, and West 32nd Street on the south.

A Small Area Plan is used mainly to guide future land use in a portion of a city. In the case of Minneapolis, it is an informal process that provides an opportunity for neighborhoods to have a hand in the physical design of their community as a long-term vision. The Calhoun Gateway Small Area Plan will be referred to when WCNC and CIDNA acquire funds to use for the betterment of their neighborhoods.

As a graduate student studying urban planning at the University of Minnesota, I have been hired to draft land use plans for the Calhoun Gateway. I grew up in the CIDNA neighborhood, which I believe gives me a good sense of its past as well as how it can be improved for the future. The creation of land use plans is important for guiding future growth, development, and land use alterations. My research and suggestions will hopefully guide the improvement of infrastructure and resources in the area for enjoyment by residents and visitors to be compatible with the built environment.

Contextual Information

The Minneapolis Plan

The Calhoun Gateway falls primarily between two community corridors within the Calhoun-Isles community - West Lake Street and Excelsior Boulevard. These two streets have been named community corridors under Minneapolis' comprehensive plan, *The Minneapolis Plan*. According to *The Minneapolis Plan*, "community corridors are streets that connect neighborhoods, carry a moderate volume of traffic, and have a primarily residential character but support low-intensity mixed use at key intersections."¹

A community corridor supports:

- ◆ Consolidating commercial uses
- ◆ Promoting viable street life during the day and evening by encouraging a mix of uses at appropriate locations
- ◆ Strengthening the residential character by developing a variety of housing types
- ◆ Enhancing the pedestrian environment

The West Calhoun and Cedar-Isles-Dean neighborhoods lie within the Calhoun-Isles area of Minneapolis (for a map of neighborhood boundaries, see **Appendix A**). Both neighborhoods are entry points to the city from the western suburbs of St. Louis Park and Edina, which gives them the opportunity to provide a context of Minneapolis for visitors arriving from the

West Lake Street and Excelsior Boulevard are "community corridors."

Both neighborhoods are entry points from western suburbs.

¹ From *The Minneapolis Plan*'s section on "Community Corridors."

west. Many of the patrons to the retail stores within the neighborhoods are from these and further suburban areas.

Demographics

Within the area comprised of the West Calhoun and CIDNA neighborhoods, the total population from 2000 is 4,563 residents with 59 percent living in CIDNA.² From 1990 to 2000, West Calhoun saw a decrease in its population by a mere 0.5 percent while CIDNA enjoyed an increase of over 20 percent in that ten-year period.

Age

The median age of a West Calhoun resident in 2000 was 31.6 years old, where 42 years old was the median age of residents in the CIDNA neighborhood. The fastest-growing age group in both neighborhoods from 1990 to 2000 is for those people who fall within the age bracket of 45-54 years. Only 54 of the 1,865 West Calhoun residents are under the age of 18, while CIDNA has 304 of its 2,698 fall into the same age category.

Race or Ethnicity

Within the area comprising both neighborhoods, seven percent of the population in 2000 identified with being non-white. This compares to the identification of almost 35 percent of the total Minneapolis population of 382,618 people as non-white.³ 53 out of the 2,698 residents in CIDNA are Black or African-American, which is an increase of over 152 percent from 1990. West

The total combined population of the neighborhoods is 4,563.

Seven percent of the neighborhoods identify as non-white.

² All neighborhood demographic information was found through the City of Minneapolis website (www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us).

³ Minneapolis demographic information for 1990 and 2000 was compiled from the U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

Calhoun experienced a 31.3 percent decrease in the number of Black or African-American residents from 1990 to 2000 – from 80 to 55 of its residents. The entire city saw a 30 percent increase in the number of residents identifying with this race.

The amount of Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander residents grew substantially in both neighborhoods. In CIDNA, residents of this race grew by 152.4 percent to 59 people in 2000. West Calhoun experienced an 88.1 percent growth from 1990 to 2000 to 79 residents. The city saw a similar growth in residents identifying with this race – 150 percent growth from 15,723 in 1990 to 23,744 in 2000.

Forty residents (2 percent) of West Calhoun have an ethnic origin of Hispanic or Latino, which is an increase of 8.1 percent from 1990 to 2000. In the same period, the CIDNA neighborhood lost 6.1 percent of its Hispanic or Latino residents.

Household Characteristics

The total number of households within both neighborhoods is 2,756, where CIDNA has a mere one percent higher household population than West Calhoun. However, only 41 households in West Calhoun have individuals under the age of eighteen while CIDNA has 176.

The total number of housing units in the two neighborhoods is 2,888; 60 percent (1733 units) of those are renter-occupied. This is an increase of 13.3 percent from 1990 to 2000. In 2000, 62.9 percent of the renter-occupied housing units fell within the West Calhoun neighborhood boundaries.

A larger number of Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders have moved into the neighborhoods.

The total number of households in the two neighborhoods is 2,756 with almost an equal distribution.

60 percent of housing units are rental.

Table 1 below shows summary statistics from Census 2000 comparing the West Calhoun and Cedar-Isles-Dean neighborhoods.

Table 1

2000	TOTAL POP.	MEDIAN AGE (YRS)	% NON-WHITE	# HOUSING UNITS
West Calhoun	1,865	31.6	9.4%	1,391
Cedar-Isles-Dean	2,698	42.0	5.3%	1,497
TOTAL	4,563	N/A	N/A	2,888

Source: City of Minneapolis Planning Department, Research and Strategic Planning Division. October 2001.

Existing Building Conditions

Of the sixty-four parcels located within the Calhoun Gateway, thirty-four have been assigned a rating of "4", or average, by the Minneapolis city assessor. Buildings are rated on a scale of 1-7 where "1" is the best and "7" is the worst. Only three parcels have a rating of "1". Seven buildings have been given a rating between "5" and "7". To view a map of existing building conditions, see **Appendix B**.

All of this information is meant to set a context of the two neighborhoods and the Calhoun Gateway. Even though the demographics are not extensive, they may help in deciphering trends in the area that can guide future land use decisions.

The city assessor considers half of the buildings within the Calhoun Gateway average.

Existing and Adjacent Land Use Plans

Many land use plans have been created within the study area as well as in adjacent neighborhoods. It is not only good to frame new and innovative ideas for the Calhoun Gateway Small Area Plan, but also to build a connection to these past land use plans. Additionally, the Small Area Plan should be compatible and enhance the plans created for adjoining neighborhoods. To find existing land use and zoning maps of the Calhoun Gateway within West Calhoun and CIDNA, see **Appendix C** and **Appendix D**.

Existing Plans

Cedar-Isles-Dean NRP Neighborhood Action Plan

Ratified in October 1994, this plan lays out neighborhood goals in order to receive funds through the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization (NRP) Program. The Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Action Plan envisioned a neighborhood with a strong sense of community identity while also forming connections to adjoining neighborhoods.

Issues:

- ♦ CIDNA lacks a strong sense of community
- ♦ The commercial district is oriented away from the neighborhood
- ♦ There are no central gathering places
- ♦ Commuter traffic on residential streets

The main purpose of the plan was to state neighborhood goals and suggest ways to meet them. Strategies suggested to work toward the alleviation of

Existing plans include:

- ♦ **Cedar-Isles-Dean NRP Neighborhood Action Plan**
- ♦ **West Calhoun NRP Neighborhood Action Plan**
- ♦ **Excelsior Boulevard Corridor Study**

neighborhood issues included:

Strategies:

- ◆ Identify entrances to the neighborhood through signage and landscaping
- ◆ Create convenient pedestrian and bicycle connections to the commercial area
- ◆ Seek out a site for Neighborhood Early Learning Center to provide a variety of family services and community meeting space
- ◆ Implement "traffic calming" techniques through the redesign of dangerous or confusing intersections

West Calhoun NRP Neighborhood Action Plan

The West Calhoun neighborhood ratified their NRP Neighborhood Action Plan in April 1999 after three years of preparation. It was intended not to change the character of the community, but to unify it and improve livability. Some issues West Calhoun faced include:

Issues:

- ◆ The neighborhood is fragmented with large portions in institutional ownership (the Park Board, the Minikahda Club, and the railroad)
- ◆ About 80 percent of the neighborhood residents are renters
- ◆ The neighborhood lacks convenient pedestrian and bicycle connections between Lake Calhoun, the Village Center, and the Midtown Greenway

Through a process geared toward neighborhood input, some key strategies were recognized to achieve the stated goals. The Action Plan includes extended funding information and timelines for all the strategies.

Strategies:

The West Calhoun neighborhood lacks convenient pedestrian and bicycle connections to major neighborhood destinations.

- ◆ Create partnerships in order to make physical connections for residents throughout the neighborhood
- ◆ Include a diverse group of residents in the planning process
- ◆ Improve pedestrian infrastructure through widening sidewalks, using bollards, installing retaining walls, and the striping of crosswalks

Excelsior Boulevard Corridor Study

Written in September 1998, the corridor study was the first step in creating a master plan for the corridors in the West Calhoun neighborhood. The aim of the master plan is to make Excelsior Boulevard and West Calhoun Parkway more pedestrian-friendly through traffic-calming efforts, crosswalks, and sidewalks. Excelsior Boulevard is West Calhoun's "Main Street," and it also connects Minneapolis to St. Louis Park.

Neighborhood design principles discussed in the study include:

- ◆ Evoke a strong sense of neighborhood identity, creating a unique gathering place for both residents and visitors
- ◆ Invest in the public realm
- ◆ Broaden the mix of land uses, incorporating mixed-use where possible
- ◆ Improve connectivity while providing a balanced and accessible network of movement
- ◆ Celebrate existing strengths
- ◆ Promote public safety and security
- ◆ Encourage environmental responsibility and sustainability

The study was separated into four phases that began with site analysis and

The master plan aims to make West Calhoun more pedestrian friendly.

data collection and ended with the submission of final documents. The last three phases included community meetings open to the general public.

Adjacent Plans

Lake Street Midtown Greenway Corridor Framework Plan

This plan was prepared in June 1999, and it discusses the revitalization of Lake Street in coordination with the development of the Midtown Greenway. One of the main goals of the plan was to direct attention to the rich history and potential for the rail corridor and Lake Street to be a place for recreation and celebration in Minneapolis.

The Framework Plan describes the potential for revitalization in the Lake Street/Midtown Greenway corridor by focusing on six areas:

- ◆ West Calhoun Gateway
- ◆ Hennepin Avenue and Lake Street
- ◆ Urban Village
- ◆ South Whittier Redevelopment Plan
- ◆ Nicollet Avenue Re-Opening
- ◆ 4th and Lake Redevelopment Plan

The focus on West Calhoun mainly pertains to the development of Calhoun Commons as a "Village Center" on the lake. Through focusing on specific sites along the corridor, planners have the opportunity to revitalize specific neighborhoods as well as form connectivity throughout the city.

Adjacent plans include:

- ◆ **Lake Street Midtown Greenway Corridor Framework Plan**
- ◆ **Park Commons, St. Louis Park**

Park Commons, St. Louis Park

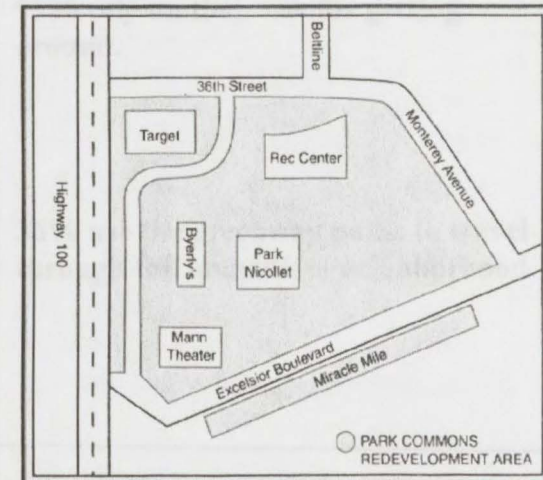
Park Commons is a redevelopment plan that will encompass many changes along Excelsior Boulevard, a major thoroughfare shared with the West Calhoun neighborhood to its east.⁴ The project is designed to create a downtown area for this first-ring suburb, and one goal is that all strip mall developments will be replaced with a traditional town center. The project has a timeline of 25 years to implement all plans. Park Commons will function as a center for St. Louis Park and a regional destination for work, shopping, and recreation. One noticeable change that has occurred to date is the installation of bricked crosswalks at close intervals across Excelsior Boulevard. The crosswalks provide a more stable environment for pedestrians, and they help to alleviate some of the physical and psychological barriers that arise along a busy and wide street.

Revitalization features include:

- ◆ Mixed uses
- ◆ Mixed-income housing
- ◆ Pedestrian/bicycle connections to Wolfe Park
- ◆ Underground parking
- ◆ A transit hub



Proposed Park Commons streetscape



Park Commons redevelopment area

⁴ Information found at the City of St. Louis Park "What is Park Commons?" www.stlouispark.org as well as through Met Council's LCDA grant award recipients.

Community Input

The most important aspect of any planning process is public participation, particularly in the creation of a Small Area Plan. The City of Minneapolis instituted an informal Small Area Plan process with the intention of placing the decision-making authority at the local level so as to allow neighborhoods to decide for themselves how they would look and feel.

In the case of the Calhoun Gateway, many stakeholders were involved in the planning of ideas. They included:

- ◆ Residents – owners and renters
- ◆ Business owners
- ◆ Board members
- ◆ NRP staff

Neighborhood input was gathered through informal interviews, attendance at neighborhood meetings, and a survey of West Calhoun and CIDNA residents. After all the information was compiled, trends in neighborhood assets and liabilities arose that shaped the rest of the Small Area Plan. The stakeholders also created a “wish list” for what they would like to see occur in the study area, and sample answers can be found in **Appendix E**.

All households within the two neighborhoods received the survey, and 235 residents sent back surveys for a return rate of nine percent. At the annual meetings of both neighborhoods, a drawing was held among the returned surveys for gift certificates to restaurants in Calhoun Village and Calhoun Commons. Even though the return rate is low, residents expressed many

Neighborhood input was gathered through interviews, neighborhood meetings, and a survey.

235 households returned the survey.

worthwhile opinions and ideas on their neighborhood and the surrounding area.

Survey Results

Among the 235 households that returned the survey, CIDNA residents were 57 percent (135) of the total. 45 percent of the CIDNA residents have lived in the neighborhood for over ten years, and 74 percent of the West Calhoun residents have lived in their neighborhood for under ten years. Among all the surveys, twenty-five of the residents have lived in their home for over 25 years.

Transportation

93 percent (215) of respondents use a car as their primary mode of transportation. A mere three percent use a bicycle as their primary mode of transportation, and both public transportation and walking were indicated in eight percent of the survey results.⁵

Seven percent of the respondents use the greenway paths located throughout the neighborhoods for commuting purposes. More importantly, 36 percent (84) use the paths to travel to destinations within the immediate area.

Neighborhood Assets

Respondents were asked whether they believe five different things to be assets in this area of Minneapolis that other areas do not have:

- ◆ Concentration of retail
- ◆ Recreational amenities

⁵ Some respondents indicated more than one primary mode of transportation.

CIDNA residents comprised 57% of returned surveys, while West Calhoun residents were 43%.

93% rely on their car for getting around.

36% use the greenway paths to travel through the immediate neighborhood.

- ◆ Mix of housing types
- ◆ Proximity to the lakes
- ◆ Close to Uptown and Downtown

The fact that the area is close to Uptown and Downtown ranked the highest with 98 percent of respondents viewing it as an asset. The concentration of retail (97%) and the proximity to the city lakes (94%) also ranked well as assets for residents. 71 percent believe recreational amenities are an asset, and only 35 percent of the residents found the mix of housing types to be an asset.

Neighborhood Downfalls

The options provided to respondents on the area's biggest downfalls included:

- ◆ Concentration of retail
- ◆ Traffic
- ◆ Lack of landscaping on public thoroughfares
- ◆ Lack of neighborhood identity

The survey found that traffic is the most overwhelming downfall in the area with 76 percent. The excessive amount of traffic was also mentioned by the majority of respondents in another question asking about their least favorite part of the commercial and residential neighborhood, mainly emphasizing traffic during peak commuting hours at the corner of Lake Street and Dean Parkway. The lack of landscaping along public thoroughfares is considered another downfall by 17 percent of respondents. Otherwise, the other statistics proved inconsequential.

Commercial Centers

Respondents were asked whether they shop at Calhoun Commons and

**Proximity to Uptown and Downtown
rated as the highest asset among
respondents.**

**Most residents find traffic to be an
overwhelming downfall in the area.**

Calhoun Village, and then they were to choose which they preferred. Many of the residents did not have a preference, but over half did indicate which they liked better; 83 (70%) prefer Calhoun Village to Calhoun Commons. Many residents had concerns with the amount of congestion in the parking lot of Calhoun Commons, and others felt that Calhoun Village has a better variety of stores that fit their lifestyles. Numerous respondents pointed out that a hardware store would add greatly to that variety. Many of the respondents who prefer Calhoun Commons find it more aesthetically pleasing. Only a couple residents expressed a dislike of the amount of commercial uses in the area.

Survey Analysis

The survey results indicate that residents have an overall feeling of satisfaction with the commercial and residential portions of their neighborhoods. Even though most people use their cars when leaving the area, many prefer to walk via the greenway paths to arrive at neighborhood destinations. When they travel either by walking or driving to Calhoun Commons or Calhoun Village, they are patronizing a variety of stores but sometimes finding it difficult to navigate through both parking lots.

Residents appreciate the beauty of their surroundings, including the lakes and open green spaces throughout the neighborhoods. They like to be able to access the greenways and lake paths for recreation and exercise, but residents sometimes find it difficult to cross busy intersections. Overall, West Calhoun and CIDNA stakeholders enjoy the amenities found within the neighborhoods.

Calhoun Village is preferred to Calhoun Commons.

Opportunity Sites

General and specific land use planning ideas became apparent through information received from neighborhood meetings, interviews, and surveys. Residents and business owners appreciate the beauty and resources provided within West Calhoun and CIDNA, however the concepts and specific sites explained in this section will hopefully act as a catalyst in creating an environment that can further enhance their love of the community. The Calhoun Gateway and its surrounding area offer a number of amenities for residents, however some improvements can be made in the future.

This section includes a brief explanation of two urban planning concepts that comprise the majority of improvements along the Calhoun Gateway. They are:

- ◆ Creating a Sense of Place
- ◆ Improving Neighborhood Transportation

Within each of the planning concepts, various specific improvement sites are described. Each site is explained and then followed with anecdotal information on how to improve it. This is not an exhaustive list of opportunities for planning redevelopment. All information included in this section is meant to aid in creating a more livable community for residents, business owners, and visitors to the neighborhoods.

Improvements that will help to:

- ◆ **Create a sense of place**
- ◆ **Improve neighborhood transportation**

Creating a Sense of Place

Due to the location of the neighborhoods in Minneapolis, they are a gateway into the city from the outside world. The Calhoun Gateway within the West Calhoun and CIDNA neighborhoods needs to create identifiable features so visitors know they have entered a worthwhile part of the city, but residents also should feel a sense of attachment to their surroundings. The commercial centers located within the neighborhoods have become destinations for these non-residents rather than to simply service people in the immediate area. One particular technique used to accomplish such a task is to create some common visual features found throughout the Calhoun Gateway with art as the dominant theme.

Such features include:

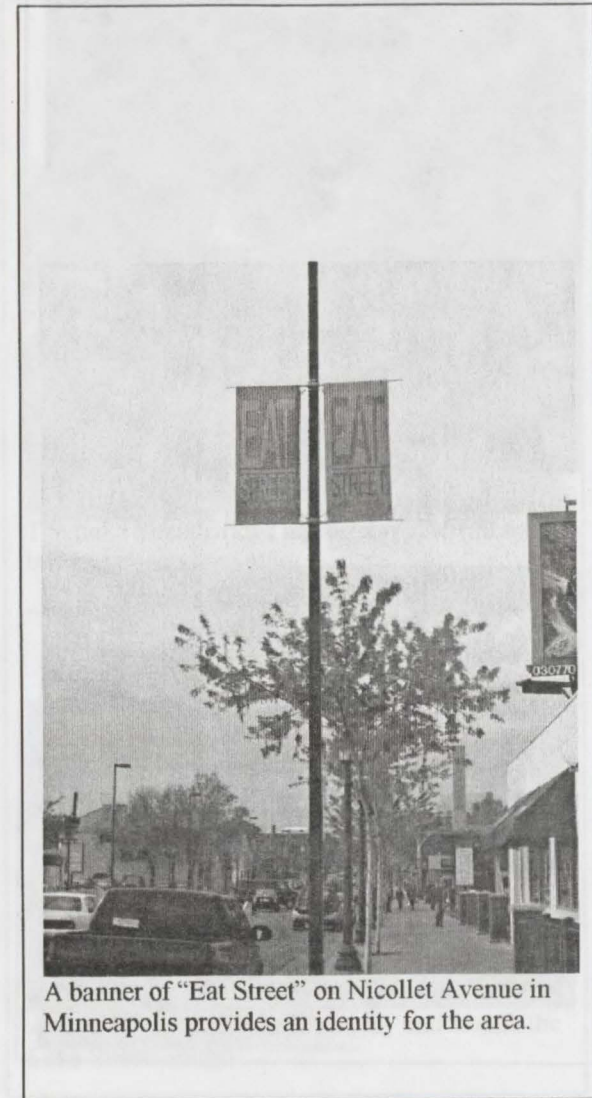
- ◆ Banners
- ◆ Landscaping
- ◆ Pedestrian-Scale Lighting
- ◆ Transit Amenities

Banners

Many known neighborhoods or attractions throughout the city place banners on poles along the street to welcome visitors as well as name the specific site. This also provides a sense of place for residents because of the name recognition of their community.

Landscaping

A continuous style of landscaping found throughout the Calhoun Gateway can



A banner of "Eat Street" on Nicollet Avenue in Minneapolis provides an identity for the area.

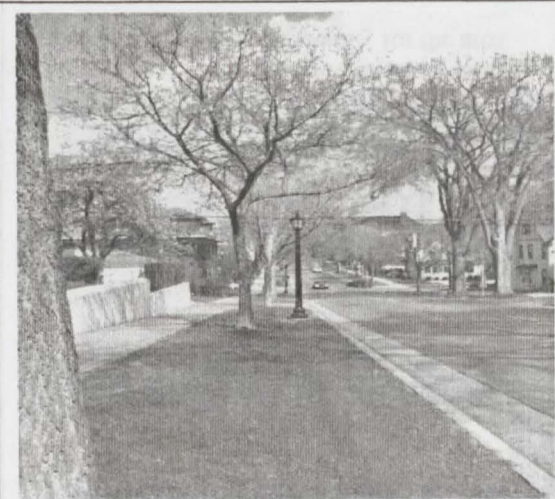
also achieve the goal of creating a sense of place for visitors and residents. In many parts of the commercial area, there is no definition between buildings, sidewalks, and the streets. These neighborhoods are nestled between a plethora of natural resources, and many of those features should be incorporated into the commercial node. This can be done with planters dispersed along the two community connectors, Lake Street and Excelsior Boulevard, or with similar landscaping on the islands in the commercial parking lots. Additionally, many of the paved boulevards separating traffic are wide enough for some greenery. Landscaping can also act as a buffer between pedestrians on the sidewalk and traffic in the street in order to create a safer environment. Better landscaping throughout the commercial area can make a difference both physically and psychologically.

Pedestrian-Scale Lighting

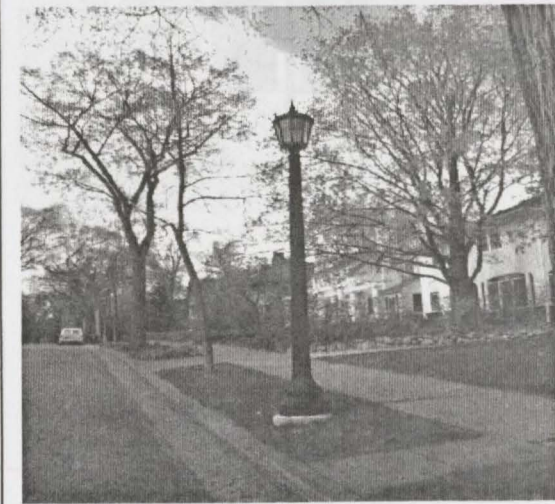
Much of the lighting located along streets in the Calhoun Gateway is ugly and only useful for cars. The light posts are tall and extend forward to only light the streets, which is both nonfunctional and unsafe for people on the sidewalk at night. Pedestrian-scale lighting along the Calhoun Gateway both on the street and in commercial parking lots would add a traditional and more livable look to the area. Some pedestrian-scale lighting is present in parts of West Calhoun along Excelsior Boulevard. However, previous neighborhood efforts by CIDNA have suggested there may not be strong support for additional assessments to improve lighting.

Transit Amenities

Bus stops and bus shelters can be improved both functionally and decoratively to create a consistent look throughout the Calhoun Gateway. Moreover, it may act as an incentive to promote the ridership of public transportation.



Pedestrian-scale light posts in Lowry Hill



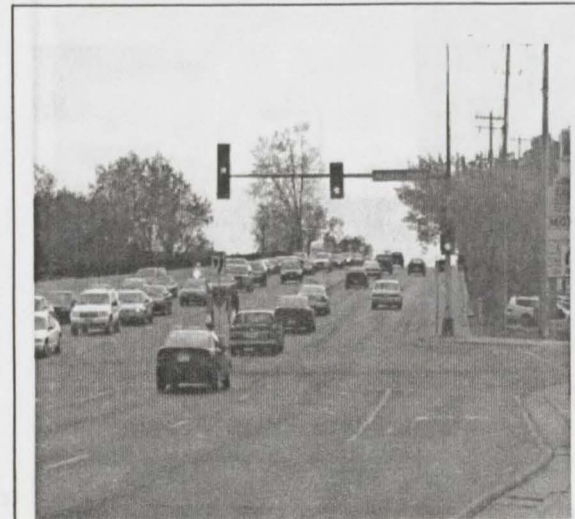
Improving Neighborhood Transportation

The partnership between the West Calhoun Neighborhood Council (WCNC) and the Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA) came to fruition over a shared stretch of land on Lake Street. The Lake Street Bridge, which is just west of Calhoun Village and Calhoun Commons, has become an area of concern for both neighborhoods. It is because of this commonality as well as others that WCNC and CIDNA believed it beneficial to create a shared Small Area Plan of the commercial center and surrounding area.

Many of the ideas and concerns for the improvement of neighborhood transportation emphasize creating an infrastructure that accommodates a variety of transportation modes. This means slowing traffic and dreaming up ways to make the Calhoun Gateway more human-scale rather than catered to automobiles in a suburban strip mall fashion. A map of all transportation routes within the Calhoun Gateway can be found in **Appendix F**. The map exhibits streets, bus routes, and all designated bike and walking paths.

Improvements pertain to:

- ◆ Lake Street Bridge
- ◆ Lake Street/Excelsior Boulevard
- ◆ Bus Shelters
- ◆ Signage for the Midtown Greenway
- ◆ Pedestrian Bridge
- ◆ Commercial Parking Lots
- ◆ West Calhoun Access Point



The Lake Street Bridge has narrow sidewalks and lacks any aesthetic value.



A view of the Midtown Greenway underneath the Lake Street Bridge.

Lake Street Bridge

The neighborhoods share many concerns about the bridge, including the pace of traffic over it and the lack of pedestrian safety on the narrow sidewalks. The bridge is an eyesore due to the expanse of pavement without any aesthetic or decorative qualities – it is not a pleasant view of the city for visitors coming from the western suburbs. Additionally, the Midtown Greenway travels underneath the bridge and some users feel unsafe when using it at that point.

Lake Street/Excelsior Boulevard

A difficult traffic intersection is the place where Lake Street separates from Excelsior Boulevard directly before Amoco. This is a point of serious gridlock going west during peak travel times, which consequently creates an unsafe environment for people using other forms of transportation such as bicycles or walking on the narrow sidewalk.

Additionally, the eight lanes of traffic are not conducive for a human-scale environment. The wide street makes it difficult for pedestrians to cross since it is hard to travel from one side to the next in one light, but also due to the lack of unspecified crosswalks. The one crosswalk present does not continue across the entire intersection, but instead halts at an island.

Several ideas may help create a safer intersection for people using all modes of transportation. First, time the on-demand pedestrian signals to coordinate with a person walking at an average pace across the entire intersection. This may also help to slow traffic going through the intersection. With the same idea, create designated pedestrian crosswalks by either installing a raised intersection to facilitate pedestrian traffic or use traditional striping with signage for passing cars. Most importantly, the intersection lacks any sort of landscaping. Not only can landscaping be visually pleasing, but it also acts to



The intersection of Lake Street and Excelsior Boulevard is a visual blight as well as unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists.

slow traffic and makes pedestrians and cyclists more comfortable by acting as a separator between them and the cars. Shading trees and plantings on the islands and boulevards should be considered to calm traffic as well as beautify.

Bus Shelters

Within the Calhoun Gateway, there are a number of bus stops and only minimal bus shelters. Residents are serviced well by both the #12 and #17 Metro Transit buslines that run through the neighborhoods to Uptown and Downtown Minneapolis. However, people will not be encouraged to use public transit unless they have a comfortable place to wait. For instance, one bus shelter located behind Amoco Gas Station going east on Lake Street is tucked perpendicular to the street between a shed and a brick wall. Furthermore, the bench in the shelter faces the opposite direction the bus arrives from. If transit users choose to wait inside the shelter, they are forced to look at a shed within an unkempt environment. They also run the risk of missing the bus due to visual barriers or a bench that faces the wrong direction. This is just one example of a bus shelter that is ill maintained and in a less than ideal location.

Signage for the Midtown Greenway

According to the survey, residents are using the greenway paths to travel throughout the immediate area, yet directional signage is very poor. Residents find it difficult to navigate themselves on the Midtown Greenway when they want to travel to Calhoun Commons, Calhoun Village, or Lake Calhoun. Better signage is needed to direct pedestrians and cyclists to these major neighborhood destinations.

Pedestrian Bridge

Many residents mentioned in the survey that a better connection should be



Bus shelter on Lake Street going west that provides visual barriers for riders.



Signage is needed to direct users of the Midtown Greenway to this exit into the rear of Calhoun Village.

made between Calhoun Village and Calhoun Commons for pedestrians using both retail outlets. Even though the Midtown Greenway provides entrances to both, people need a way to travel that is either direct or easy to find.

Moreover, pedestrians and bicyclists will only want to go out of their way via the Midtown Greenway if it is more safe and attractive. One inexpensive remedy is mentioned above with better amenities on the Midtown Greenway, but a dream scenario would have a pedestrian bridge over Lake Street just west of Market Plaza. Not only would pedestrians be able to travel over it freely without worrying about traffic, but a decorative sign can be placed on it for people coming from the west to know they are in the Calhoun Gateway.

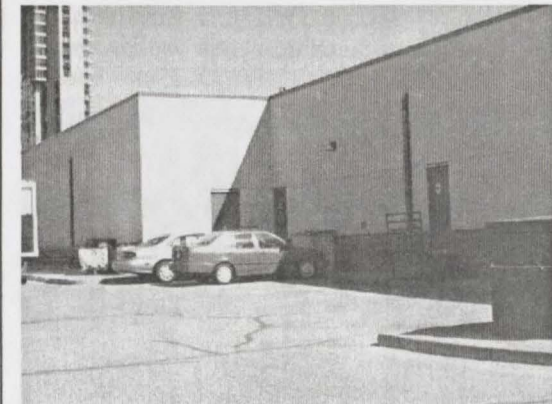
Commercial Parking Lots

Many of the survey respondents and other stakeholders pointed to the Calhoun Village and Calhoun Commons parking lots as eyesores in the neighborhood. The most-heard complaint of the Calhoun Commons parking lot was the amount of traffic and awkward flow of the cars in and out from Market Plaza. Calhoun Village is sometimes viewed as a suburban strip mall, and the fact that the parking lot is large with no landscaping does not improve the situation. Islands located in the front parking lot are strewn with gravel, but they would be perfect places for large-scale plantings that can mature into shading mechanisms. Lush green landscaping and art can go a long way to creating a more inviting, human-scale environment.

Definite possibilities exist for the rear parking lot of Calhoun Village. Since the Midtown Greenway opens into the rear lot, more emphasis should be placed on catering to patrons arriving from the rear. Beautification techniques can be used such as murals and landscaping. It can also be beneficial to accentuate the rear lot in order to draw attention to the rarely used additional parking spots.



Place for landscaping in Calhoun Village parking lot.



Potential patio area behind Calhoun Village

According to the owner of La Toscana, there are definite possibilities for using part of the rear lot for an outside patio.⁶ The patio would only decrease parking by six spots, and it would create movement all throughout the complex. He is confident that more people would patronize Calhoun Village stores if walkers and cyclists felt comfortable entering from the rear lot.

West Calhoun Access Point

The Access Point is the first proposed rest stop site located along the Midtown Greenway. It is located on West 31st Street in West Calhoun behind Whole Foods on a part of a parcel owned by Hennepin County. Not only will informational kiosks, drinking fountains, and stone benches be a benefit to pedestrians and bicyclists using the Midtown Greenway, but also the planning of this site will be of particular importance if future plans of transit along the greenway come to fruition. Landscaping and art will further create a more beautiful environment.

This list of opportunity sites in the Calhoun Gateway is not comprehensive. Both neighborhood associations are constantly working toward their own and similar goals, so hopefully these ideas can better guide their future endeavors.



The ending point of the Midtown Greenway spilling onto West 31st Street behind Calhoun Commons.



A portion of the area behind Whole Foods where the Access Point will be located.

⁶ Information provided through an interview in April 2002.

Conclusion

This Small Area Plan of the Calhoun Gateway is just the first step in the process of creating ideas for future land uses in the West Calhoun and Cedar-Isles-Dean neighborhoods. Based on the objectives of existing neighborhood plans, community input, and the idealistic goals of an educated urban planning student, this document will hopefully act as a guide in further decision-making.

The opportunity sites developed in this piece are not exhaustive, nor are they recommendations for action. They are merely ideas for creating a more beautiful, livable environment for residents as well as visitors to enjoy. This area of the city boasts many natural and recreational amenities, and it should be a goal of this project to improve the commercial centers in order to create a seamless living space. It is my vision that the neighborhoods be a place where pedestrians, bicyclists, and cars can share a common setting and find all luxuries within their own neighborhood. The Calhoun Gateway Small Area Plan is the first step toward that goal.

APPENDICES

Neighborhood Boundaries



Neighborhoods

- Cedar-Isles-Dean
- Kenwood
- Linden Hills
- West Calhoun
- Calhoun Gateway
- Water
- Streets

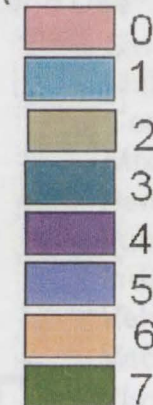


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Existing Building Conditions



Building Condition Rating
(1 is the best, 7 is the worst)



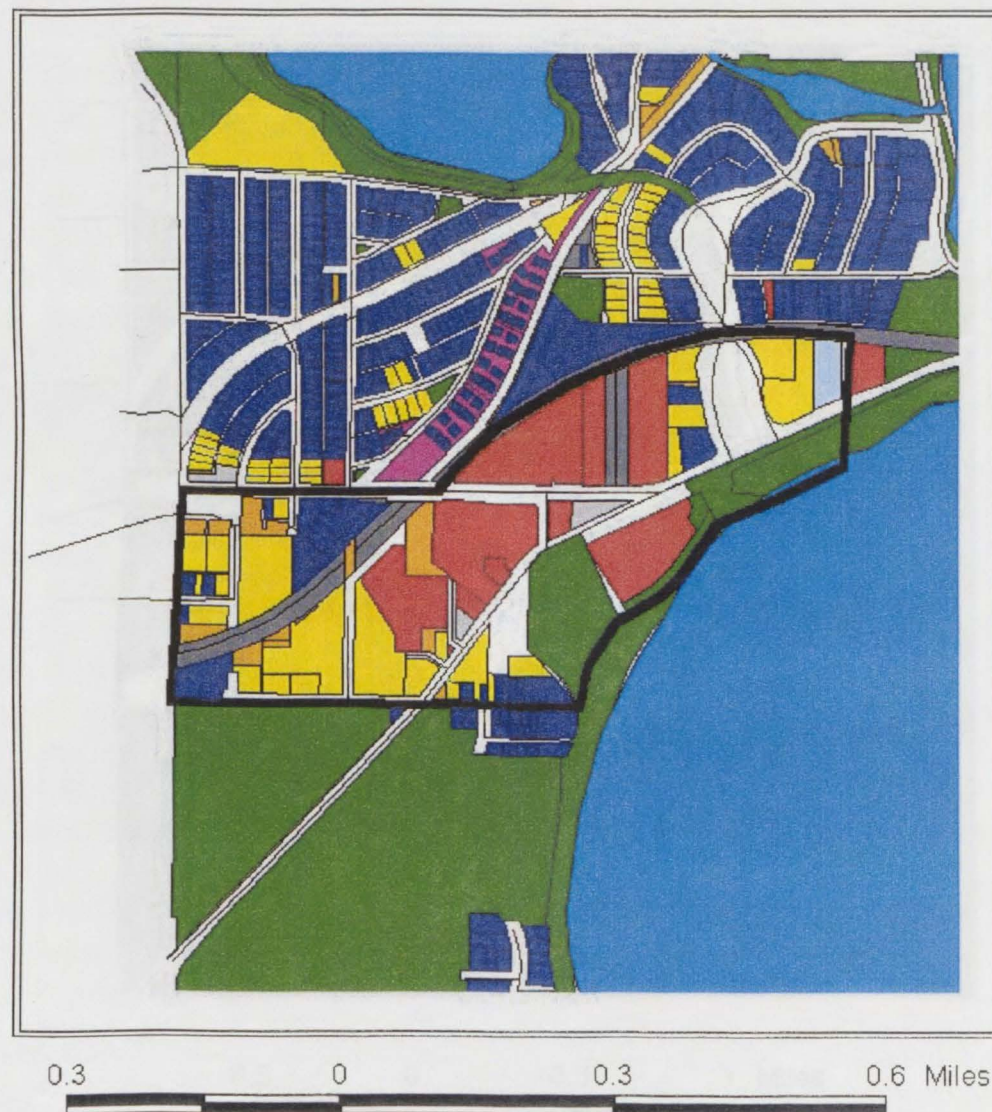
Calhoun Gateway
Water
Parks
Streets



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0.9 0 0.9 1.8 Miles

Existing Land Use Map



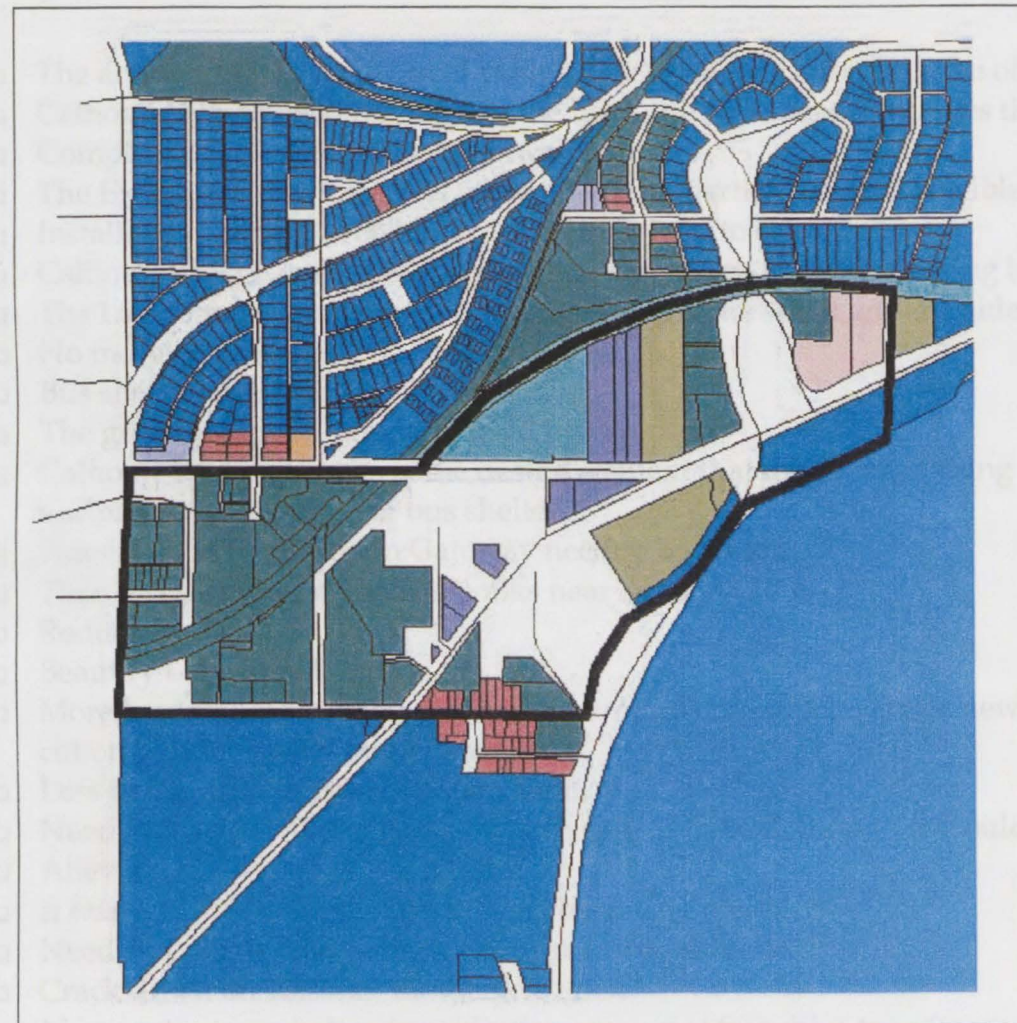
Land Use

- Single-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Commercial Office/Retail
- Mixed Use
- Parks/Recreation
- Public/Semi-public
- Industrial
- Vehicle Related Use
- Vacant
- Calhoun Gateway
- Water
- Streets



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Existing Zoning Map



Zoning Classification (Updated 1999)

- COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTER DISTRICT
- COMMUNITY SHOPPING CENTER DISTRICT
- HIGH DENSITY OFFICE RESID DISTRICT
- MULTIPLE FAMILY DISTRICT
- NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT
- NEIGHBORHOOD CORRIDOR COM DISTRICT
- NEIGHBORHOOD OFFICE RESID DISTRICT
- SINGLE FAMILY DISTRICT
- TWO FAMILY DISTRICT

Calhoun Gateway

Water

Streets



0.5 0 0.5 1 Miles

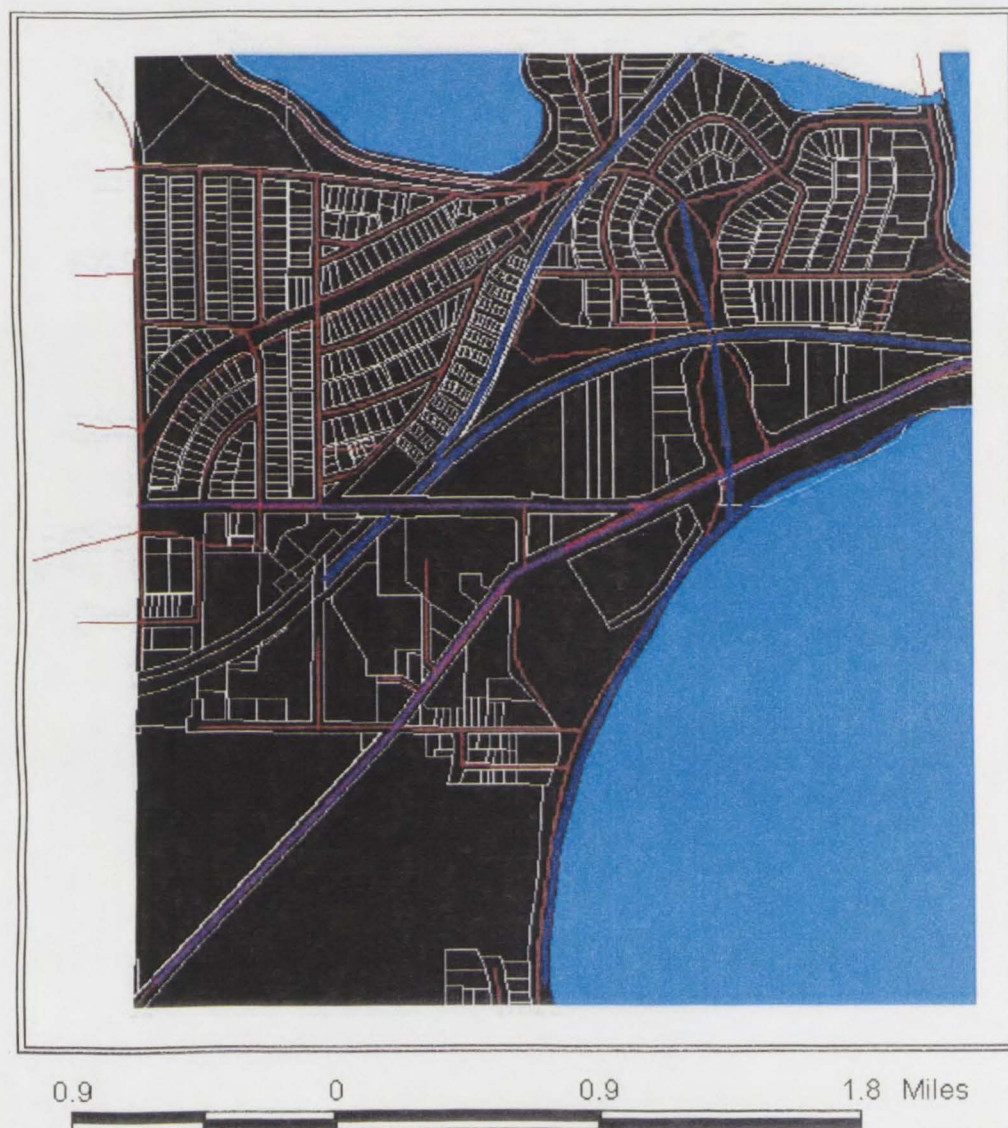
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Stakeholder "Wish List"

- ❑ The area under the Lake Street Bridge needs beautification because of the graffiti.
- ❑ Calhoun Village needs signage in the back and front that advertises the businesses.
- ❑ Complete dead ends on the greenway paths.
- ❑ The Excelsior Corridor needs some attention, particularly the horrible concrete median in front of Amoco.
- ❑ Installing a triangle at 36th and Zenith may help to calm traffic.
- ❑ Calhoun Village needs landscaping and signage to the back parking lot.
- ❑ The Lake Street Bridge needs a railing between the street and the sidewalk.
- ❑ No more commercial.
- ❑ Bus shelters are grungy.
- ❑ The greenway paths are dark, need lighting.
- ❑ Calhoun Gateway needs some design element that draws everything together: scoring sidewalks, consistent lighting, sculptures, or redesign of bus shelters.
- ❑ Sidewalks in the Calhoun Gateway need to be wider.
- ❑ There needs to be better crosswalks near Amoco.
- ❑ Reduce traffic.
- ❑ Beautify Lake Street.
- ❑ More landscaping barriers (screening) around commercial areas; new trees on streets and boulevards; grass/weeds cut on parkways and boulevards.
- ❑ Less traffic; better mass transportation.
- ❑ Need lights on walking path on north side of Lake Calhoun - it would connect West Calhoun and Uptown at night.
- ❑ Alleviate traffic in p.m. rush hour.
- ❑ It was sad to lose Radio Shack; need hardware store.
- ❑ Need stop signs or slowing device on France Avenue.
- ❑ Crack down on summer motorcycle noise.
- ❑ More restaurants in low to mid price range, not franchise type (more ethnic small ones).

- ❑ Improve water drainage.
- ❑ A wonderful French bistro would add immeasurably.
- ❑ No more large scale development like the CBC addition.
- ❑ Restaurant where you could get breakfast; inexpensive groceries; Wells Fargo ATM; post office.
- ❑ Need a stop sign at Calhoun Pkwy and W 32nd St - very difficult for pedestrians to cross at this intersection.
- ❑ Improved safety for pedestrians/bikers; improved aesthetics of commercial nodes.
- ❑ Decrease rush hour traffic.
- ❑ Improve landscaping on public thoroughfares.
- ❑ I want to stop renting and be able to buy in or close to this neighborhood.
- ❑ Need permit parking for on-street parking (similar to St Paul). This will guarantee parking for residents.
- ❑ I wish I could buy a house in the neighborhood but they are too much \$\$\$!
- ❑ Get rid of billboard at Excelsior and West 32nd Street.
- ❑ Longer crossing light time at Lake & Drew. Walkers barely make it before light changes. Cars often go through red light there.
- ❑ Improved snow removal on List Place.
- ❑ #12 buses to go downtown on the weekends (instead of having to transfer at Uptown Station).
- ❑ Need a safe, less traffic, walkway to Lake Calhoun.
- ❑ Light-rail connection.
- ❑ I would like to have a Park and Ride bus stop nearby with more direct access to downtown (or an express bus to downtown).
- ❑ Make crossing the busy streets as pedestrian safe/friendly as possible. Reduce noise in the summer - but that's tough!
- ❑ Make commercial outlets easier for pedestrians; need hardware store; parking should be behind retail in city for better pedestrian access.
- ❑ Continue to landscape and beautify main arteries.
- ❑ A pedestrian over/under pass across Lake St at Market Plaza.

Transportation Routes



-  Streets
-  Bus Routes (12 & 17)
-  Designated Bike and Walking Paths
-  Water



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